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DAVID THOMPSON--Explorer and Surveyor
of the West.

Collected by: J.W. Sherwin
10119 - 100 Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta.

Sherwin David Thompson

GREAT SCOUT

David Thompson was born of Welsh parents in Westminster, London, England, April 30, 1770. His parents were poor and in April 1777 he entered an endowed Grey Coat School for boys at Westminster where he was educated under a good mathematical master for seven years to age 14. The school books used were some of them nearly one hundred years old.

On May 20th, 1784, the Hudson Bay Company asked for four boys to go to Canada (North America then) and the masters granted two, David Thompson and Samuel McPherson, but the latter ran away and was never heard of in the school again. David wanted to see places and sailed in the Hudson Bay Company sailing ship, Prince Rupert, in May 1784, which arrived at Fort Churchill, Hudson Bay, in early September and entered their trading post where their present store stands. The Company paid the School $25 for him. After the arrival of the H.B. Co. annual ship the next year, 1785, he was sent with two Indians to their York Factory trading post, being only 15 years at the time, and trails very rough. The Hudson Bay factor there was named Marten and he got David to do most of his bookkeeping as well as all his other work.

The next year, July 21st, 1786, he was sent away again with 46 other English apprentice boys in charge of a Robert Longmore up the Hayes River to establish more trading posts on the Saskatchewan River in hand-made birch bark canoes. They started one 42 miles north of Battleford and were working amongst the Piegan and Blackfeet tribes of Indians.

David travelled down the Bow River near where Calgary is now and stayed at a large camp of the Piegan Indians where he gained the friendship of an old Chief Saukamappee which was very useful to him afterwards.

David had great natural ability and strong moral character instilled into him thro his school training. He was a strong opponent of strong liquor and whilst in charge of his posts would allow none of it to be taken in.

He was very interested in surveying and observing and recording all natural and asttonomical phenonema, his observations and notes were very correct and made with very few instruments.

He made one of the first maps of Western Canada from Lake Superior to the Pacific ocean. J.B. Tyrell a noted Government surveyor and geologist who travelled over a lot of his trails 100 years later remarked he was the greatest geographer and prospector the World had ever produced and although the maps of Western Canada have been changed many times since the latest surveys have brought them back to the places shown on David Thompson's first map.

His apprenticeship and service with the Hudson Bay Company having expired in May 1787 during which time he had travelled over 9,000 miles, he left their post at Reindeer House and walked about 75 miles south to Grand Portage, Lake Superior, to enter the service of the North West Company, controlled then by some very progressive men amongst them Roderick McKenzie a cousin of Sir Alexander McKenzie and Simon Fraser who knew of his scouting and mapping abilities and engaged him for that work. He wrote

in his diary at this time: "Left the service of the Hudson Bay Company and entered that of the Merchants of Canada May God Almighty prosper me."

In the winter of 1806-1807 he camped at Rocky Mountain House and early in the spring of 1807 he went up the Saskatchewan River and crossed the Rockies for the first time with a hand-made birch bark canoe just where our National Park engineers have completed a new bridge as part of the new scenic highway between Jasper and Banff. It would be a fitting and deserving tribute if some stone edifice was erected at this crossing to tell part of David Thompson's story to perpetuate his adventure.

After crossing the Rockies he made camp at Kootenae House known as Old Fort Kootenae about one mile northwest of the town of Athalmer where the Coloumbia river leaves Lake Windemere, B.C., flowing north. He says in his diary that winter was a very hard one. He and his partners had to shoot and eat the wild horses in the valleys as other game was so scarce.

From 1816 - 1826 he was engaged by England to survey and help mark the Boundary Line between Canada and the United States which has been disputed since.

(These notes taken from book: "David Thompson's narrative of his explorations in Western America 1784 - 1812, edited by J.B. Tyrell, published by the Champlain Society of Toronto--Edmonton Library)

11055 - 81 Ave.,
Edmonton, Alberta.

Nov. 2, 1940.

J.B. Tyrrell, Esq.,
1314 Metropolitan Bldg.,
44 Victoria St.,
Toronto 2, Ont.

Dear Sir:

Many thanks for yours of the 9th inst. and your kindly criticism of the sketches I submitted you of David Thompson.

You refer to a better description in "The Shoe & Canoe" and create my curiosity in same. Would you tell me, where a copy of this could be obtained or who are the publishers, for I would much like to see one and learn more about this worthy pioneer. I am enclosing a letter I cut out of our Journal here yesterday, bearing on the same prospector and his early trail across the Rockies - it would certainly be a fitting name to give such a connecting highway. I believe Mr. W.H. Shierholtz is the editor of the weekly paper at Rocky Mountain House town and is very interested in the early history of David Thompson.

Thanking you again for your interesting letter and with kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sherwin Thompson-Shierholtz

10119 - 100 A St.,
Edmonton, Alberta.
March 21, 1941.

Mr. W.H. Shierholtz,
Publisher,
The Mountaineer,
Rocky Mountain House,
Alberta.

Dear Mr. Shierholtz:

Re: David Thompson

I have your interesting letter of November 29th last before me and have been doing something in my small way to help a little more publicity be given to this worthy pioneer and scout, mentioned above.

I think I told you and I sent on your paper and "blazing the trail" to Dr. J.B. Tyrell 1314 Metropolitan Building 44 Victoria St. Toronto 2, Ontario, and enclose copies of replies received, which please keep as some of the information is sure to be useful.

I also wrote Mr. Macdonald Burke Director of the University Year Book to include a page on publicity and I believe he is doing so. I wish however you or your directors would write him too, as it might help what I have started with him. I enclose a copy of the letter I sent him.

I have been following your efforts through the Journal reports here and sure wish you every success with your good efforts for the "David Thompson trail" and hope it will get every support.

Yours truly,

Sherwin Thompson-Shierholtz

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Rocky Mountain House,

Alberta,

November 29, 1940.

Mr. J.W. Sherwin,

Edmonton, Alberta.

Dear Sir:

You can not imagine what pleasure it gave me to receive your letter, in regard to our "trail-blazing" trip up the North Saskatchewan to the Banff-Jasper road, and to read your interesting enclosures. So far I have only had opportunity to show it to one of my companions of the trip, but will show it to others as the opportunity offers. Your letter is further proof that probably the main object of our trip, that of bringing this matter, and the feasibility of that road, to outside attention, has been in a large measure accomplished. It now remains for us to follow the matter up, and steps in that direction are already under way. I trust that the copies of my paper, with my local account of the trip, reached you, and that you may use the spare copies to good advantage. It was a wonderful trip, even if the work at times was hard for chaps who were in no way used to it, and it was really a delightful and most interesting adventure. Nobody, here or at Nordegg, thought that it was possible, and we knew nothing of what we were going into. Now our experiences are being blazoned far and wide and of all things, probably publicity is the most important, to awaken interest in the project. Mr. Ross and I were out with two other men and spoke to the Red Deer

Board of Trade recently, and we are assured of their hearty co-operation. But Rocky Mountain House MUST TAKE the lead, and enlist the support of others.

The name "David Thompson Highway" which I first threw out to the public here, was I believe, a happy inspiration. We have a real appeal there, and one which can not help but awaken interest. Your copies of the Thompson chronologies have helped to awaken my own interest in this adventurer and explorer who has received all too little recognition. Giving his name to this proposed road, which so far as we know, he was the first white man to travel, should be considered a very fitting tribute. But there is one point in your letter on which I fear we must disagree. That is, the proposal to erect a carin or monument to his memory, out near the North Saskatchewan bridge on the Banff-Jasper road. Rocky Mountain House Trading Post was David Thompson's headquarters, and he started that trip from here, twice, so far as we know did he return to here to winter. In 1930-31 there was a beautiful carin erected to his memory, at the site of the Old Post, it was unveiled by the then Premier Brownlee in 1931. Through the special efforts of one of our old-timers Mr. W.J. Kirby, our Board of Trade in 1938 had the ruins of the old chimneys, within the same plot, restored. This year the plot has been neatly fenced, and a turn-style gate put in.

Our feeling is that another monument would only be confusing to tourists. If and when the highway goes through, it would be the "David Thompson Highway" from the river

crossing here to the Banff-Jasper junction. A suitable sign out at the junction would be very important, it would be quite fitting that it might bear a small bronze plaque. Our intention at present is, through our Board of Trade highway committee, of which Mr. Ross and I are members, to press to have the highway re-routed so that it would come right by the Memorial site, instead of nearly half a mile away as at present.

I am enclosing, for your own use and files, a print of the David Thompson cairn and the restored chimneys, and the/I believe you will see our point of view. (omission?) We are rather proud of this historic site, in fact we consider it is to our town and province what Fort Garry Gate is to Winnipeg and Manitoba. On the back of this print, you will see a copy of the inscription on the plaque on the chimneys. In the fall of 1938 we had the honor and pleasure of a visit to the chimneys by Judge Howay of New Westminster, a member of the Historic Sites Board, I was one of the party showing him around, and having a luncheon with him, and we had a most interesting afternoon. I think he has the whole Rocky Mountain House history at his finger tips.

I am herewith returning the letter which you asked back, and again most heartily thank you for your interest in our work. I hope you may be able to carry on in this good work, as we will need all the help we can get. It is most helpful to know that Dr. Tyrrell is interested. Could you give me his address? It may be helpful in correspondence in our campaign. A short stretch of the

proposed road, at the west end, lies within the National Parks area.

Sincerely yours,

Publisher "The Mountaineer"

Note: I am not the Board of Trade secretary, but merely happened to have these few sheets of paper easily available.

W.H.S.

P.S. Plaque on Cairn has Thompson inscription. I have not a copy of it immediately available.

TRAIL BLAZERS TELL OF THEIR EXPERIENCES.

The Mountaineer, Oct. 16/40.

About twelve years ago, when the now completed highway connecting Alberta's two great National Parks was first mooted one man in Rocky Mountain House and Nordegg, out to that highway. (omission) He was laughed at. At that time it was doubtful if a car would ever travel as far west of Rocky as the Horburg corner.

In the early spring of 1931 a party consisting of Ernest Ross, Miss Mary Ross, Wm. Ellenburgh, and the late John Kochem set out to take two cars through to Mordegg, picking up several reenforcements on the way. The difficulties they encountered, and the obstacles they surmounted have long since become a matter of history, but they accomplished their object. Later on, in the spring of 1933, just a few weeks after his arrival here, your scribe of this story had the privilege of accompanying two of Mr. Ross's pioneer-

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ing parties in improving the old pack trail as far as Jackfish Coulee. Beyond that point, one unemployment camp was working eastward from Nordegg. Late that summer another was added, starting at Chambers Creek, and the following spring still another further west. And so, a fairly good "dry weather" road to Nordegg, while from there to Windy Point (28 miles) there is a good highway, the soil and construction being of a different nature.

And now another story. From Nordegg west, for miles, there is an area which by its very nature must have been intended by the Creator as a great playground for humanity. Timber, open plains, big game, wild mountain streams, magnificent waterfalls, canyons, majestic mountains. What a setting. Two of the 1931 pioneers, Messrs. Ross & Ellenburgh, and three new ones, Messrs. Brett, Oppel and Schierholtz (your scribe) set out on Tuesday morning, October 1st, to conquer that remaining thirty-four miles, which would link the present road with the Jasper-Lake Louise road. We will endeavour to give our readers a detailed story, but from now on we drop the "editorial we" and the pronoun embraces the entire party.

The trip to Windy Point of course was without incident, except for the fact that a visit with Forest Ranger Billy Bell brought the information that we "might" get through but that we would have some difficulty at Whirlpool Point. After a good dinner there, we left about 3 p.m. To Magnus Oppel this was the first trip through there and the view from the top of the Bighorn hill was quite a thrill.

Crossing Windy Point, we arrived at the Whitegoat Cabin, the last few miles being after dark. We camped in the cabin, started a fire, had a splendid hot stew for supper and by the light of a lantern and a candle, even indulged in a short card game. Made up the bunks, but had hardly started to sleep when we discovered that a sixth had joined the party. Our slumbers were frequently disturbed by the gnawing or scampering of a pack rat, or one or other pounding on the floor or the bunk hoping to chase him off.

Breakfast was had by lantern light, and dawn saw the party on the way to ford the Whitegoat river, low at present, but swift. Once over, rapid progress was made across the Kootenay Plains for some miles. Past the old aerial ferry opposite Wilson cabin, past the old Barnes Ranch, and to an Indian encampment, we must have scared the squaws who, seeing the cars coming (for the first time across those plains) hastened to close up their tents and stared at us. Two members of the party tried to elicit some information about the road and distances. Very little beyond the usual "ugh" was forthcoming. A few choclate bars and a package of tobacco changed matters, and one member was asked the time, and requested to wind and set their clock. Arrived at Whirlpool Point just before noon and prepared for lunch. And there the difficult part of the trip started. A high rock cliff projection from the mountain to the river, rising over six hundred feet above the trail level. We spent two solid days taking the cars over this point, making in that time possibly a quarter of a mile of actual distance. Pulling the light car up by rope and blocks on to the first

ledge, it was then used to tow the truck. Only a few feet of progress could be made at a time, then blocking the truck, backing up the car, and shortening the rope. Before the first ledge was negotiated it became necessary to hoist the rear end of the truck and block it up, so as to secure a forward pull. Thus over several ledges and out on the summit on Friday noon. All the camp supplies than had to be "packed" up this cliff, and reloaded on the truck. Then slow but farily steady progress for a few miles, with two creeks to ford.

We were just at the edge of the "Big Timber" when, in going through a rather deep gully the truck stopped against a big rock. As a rule two or three of the party were walking ahead, moving any obstacles out of the trail or occasionally chopping down a high stump. Someone called to Mr. Ross "back up". I can't he replied. He tried again, but the truck refused to move though the engine was running. An investigation revealed a broken axel. Dusk was falling and it was decided to pitch camp, prepare supper, and then hold a Council-of-War. Mr. Ross with one helper proceeded to dissect the truck, two men set up the tents, the fifth carried a night and morning supply of water from the river over a half mile, only to learn that a big bend in the river made water available within a couple of hundred feet. It was decided that the entire party would go to work with a vengence early in the morning to reach the highway as quickly as possible (nine miles away). Once there, two men would go out to Lake Louise or Banff and obtain repairs, while the others would hike back to camp. But the best

laid plans of mice and men etc. It took a terrific days' work, till 8.20 in the evening before the highway was reached, in going through about a four-and-a-half mile stretch of as fine a stand of spruce and pine as one could imagine, we found a number of big windfalls, carried down, so we were told, by a little cyclone just a few weeks ago. Logs, 24 inches through, had to be sawn out and removed from the trail. Over a dozen saw cuts, and plenty of axe work was required to clear that trail. Later, about three miles from the junction, long gravel hill side cut had to be widened and a deep trench made on the high side, before the car could be taken up, and finally on reaching the junction, the bungalo camp was closed to the public, no food or shelter was available. Since the early breakfast only a light lunch of bread pork and beans, and cold water had fortified us, and we had passed out of the salubrious climate of the valley into freezing temperature. Windbreakers, etc. were nine miles behind us, a journey back to the camp at night was not to be thought of in that area. Shovels, axes, pick, ropes etc. were concealed in the bush, the five of us packed into Bill Ellenburg's roadster, and so away for the 50 mile journey to Lake Louise. We arrived there about eleven, asked for a meal at the only eating house in the hamlet, and were turned down cold. True, we do not blame the girls at the place if they thought we were a gang of hoboes just ordered off a freight train.

It was one time when the wonderful spirit of the party was at a pretty low ebb. But one member noticed a light in the back of what was obviously a private house close by

and announced that he was going to call and see if they could give us a meal. The good lady of the house, the wife of a section man, answered the call, said they did not have a great deal as they just get their supplies shipped in once a week, Monday, and this was Saturday night, but such as she had, we were welcome to. We were invited to come in and get warmed up, and in a short time there were piles of meat sandwiches and hot egg sandwiches, and plenty of hot coffee. Thank God for kindly souls such as these people proved themselves. Once more life was worth living, and it wasnnot at all difficult to get a fairly good sleep on the carpet on the floor of the ladies' waiting room in the station, where there was steam heat.

Without breakfast three of the party journeyed to Banff in the morning, and quickly made arrangements for the truck repairs.Back to Lake Louise, and before noon Mr. Ross was on his way up the highway with three of the party, taking them within six miles of the camp, while the fifth member waited for his return that night, to pick up the repairs which arrived at 2.45 a.m. Out of Lake Louise again on Monday morning, and about 4.30 that afternoon the entire party was together at the camp. By dark the new axle was in place and it was expected that all would be "clear sailing" early in the morning.

But grief was not quite over. The first attempt to move the truck showed that in the jar in which the axle had been broken, the tierod had been bent. It was taken out, pounded straight, a spruce pole grooved out to fit over

as a reinforcement, and wired on. In the meantime all the packing had been done, and now the truck was loaded and we were on our way out. Thetruck, being wider than the car, required some careful manipulating i n passing through narrow "gaps" between trees or stumps on either side, and fenders and running boards came into contact several times. We had no serious difficulties till we brought the truck to the long narrow gravel hill previously mentioned. Over three hours of strenuous pick and shovel work before it was considered safe for the heavy truck, and the driver says even then it wasn't safe. The progress was just a few feet at a time, then another look over the situation. Pebbles and gravel were rolling continuously, one slip could mean only one thing, a roll of about 400 feet down the bank when the top was reached, all indulged in a hearty cheer of thankfulness. Every difficulty and every peril had been successfully met. It was now comparatively easy, though slow going to complete the three miles out to the highway with both travelling units again together. We reached the junction just before six, marked it with a metal sign "Rocky Mountain House, 118 miles, Route not open." Crossed the bridge, paid the necessary visit tothe park warden, and started out for practically a non-stop trip to Banff, arriving there around 11 Tuesday night. We had a cold lunch on the trail that day, so the big supper of stakes, french-fried potatoes and banana cream pie, just about midnight was a welcome climax.

News reporters and a camera man next morning could not be eluded. Historic old Rocky House had added another page to its history. But this little episode over, the homeward trip was started. A few minutes visit with Tommy Pruett, (formerly of Nordegg) at Cochrane, a hastily prepared hot dinner beside the trail, just at North Calgary, and a safe arrival back in Rocky about eight that night. The task was completed, the trail marked, and the only after effects were a few blisters or aching muscles. Every member of the party felt the better for a week of grand adventuring.

The return of the "Trail Blazers" was marked on Friday evening by a Board of Trade banquet, at which Mr. McQueen, district engineer, represented the Dept. of Public Works, and five other Red Deer men were present. Each member of the Trail blazing party spoke, relating various experiences, and humorous incidents, with E.S. Brett giving the actual running story of the trip in a very comprehensive manner. The report was most enthusiastically received, and a striking fact was that, in so far as feasibility of the route, and actual construction problems were concerned, Engineer McQueen said that the verbal reports just given were almost identical with the official summary given by the survey party which made the locations and set the grade stakes last winter

844 Tegler Building,
Edmonton, Alberta.

Dec. 13 1937

Douglas Mackay Esq.
Hudson's Bay House
Winnipeg.

Dear Sir,

On March 17th last you very kindly sent me some notes on the Old Company's posts which I have found very useful. I am taking the liberty of asking you once again for any notes you may have of Kootenay house and site which I believe was or did belong to the Northwestern Traders which your Company took over. There is a note about it in David Thompson's book by Tyrell, but you may have further records in your library concerning same, also where a Mount Nelson was which he (Thompson) is supposed to have camped at along the North Saskatchewan river, if you have I would be gladif you would mark same on attached map. Possibly your records shew how the Kootenay house was constructed. I would much appreciate any information you can give me concerning this spot and camping ground of this early trader.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours Truly,

J.W. Sherwin

P.S. The camp was used by Thompson in his first crossing of the Rockies, so I presume it would be near the west side of Mount Nelson which he mentions & location I want to find out, possibly it has been renamed now.

Information sent to J.W. Sherwin by letter dated Mar. 17th, 1937, from Douglas MacKay, Hudson Bay Co., Winnipeg, Man.

BOAT ENCAMPMENT

A North West Company establishment on the Great Bend in the Columbia river, on the east side of the mouth of Canoe River. Built by Thompson in January 1811, it was the rendezvous for travel across the mountains by Athabaska Pass. It was maintained until the railway was completed.

BOW RIVER FORT

A North West Company fort on the north bank of the Bow River at the mouth of Old Fort Creek, east of Banff and about 50 miles west of the site of old Fort Lajonquiere. Built in 1802 it was closed in 1823, two years after the union of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company.

ACTON HOUSE

The Hudson's Bay Company post adjoining the North West Company post called Rocky Mountain House, on the North Saskatchewan river near the mouth of Clearwater river. Sometimes called Rocky Mountain House.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE

A North West Company post on the North Saskatchewan river, 1½ miles above the mouth of Clearwater river, 3 miles below Pangman's tree on the north bank of the river, 70 yards from the river's edge. It stood on a high bank, well adapted for defense, as block-houses commanded the fort. It was of exceptional strength, being in territory of Blackfeet Indians; and was sometimes called Blackfeet

House. The first post here was built in 1799. After the union, the Hudson's Bay Company occupied the post until 1875. Ruins were still visible in 1886.

HENRY'S HOUSE

Post built by Wm. Henry in 1812 on the Upper Athabaska river, near the confluence of Snaring river about 8 miles below Jasper House village of today and 20 miles above the last site of Jasper House. It was used as an outpost of Jasper House and was deserted about 1861.

FORT LAC d'ORIGNAL

A small North West Company post west of Yellowhead Pass on the present Moose Lake near Tete Jaune Cache, an enlargement of the Fraser river.

JASPER HOUSE

A North West Company post on the Upper Athabaska river. Built in 1799 at the outlet of Brule Lake and called Rocky Mountain house. In 1801 Jasper Hawes, after whom the post is supposed to have been named, took charge and moved the fort to the left bank of the river at the outlet of Jasper lake. Hawes either retired or died before 1821 when the post was taken over by the Hudson's Bay Company, as there is no record of him ever being in the service. At one time an important post, it was practically abandoned by the Company in 1875.

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In 1824-25 George Simpson made a trip from York factory to the Columbia. He visited Jasper House and crossed the mountains with horses by way of the Athabasca Pass. He wrote in his journal:-

Sherwin
Tyrell

Thompson -20
Narrative.

The Champlain Society

Toronto, January 22, 1938.

J.W. Sherwin, Esq.,
844 Tegler Building,
Edmonton, Alta.

Dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge your letter of January 18. I regret to say that David Thompson's Narrative is not available in any other edition but ours, and our volumes are not issued to any but our 500 elected members. If you wish to have your name brought before the Council for election to this Society, I should be glad to put it on the waiting-list. At present the membership is filled, and there are twenty or so names on the waiting-list. There is a life of David Thompson published by the Macmillan Company of Toronto in a series entitled Canadian Men of Action, edited by W. Stewart Wallace, which might interest you. Second-hand copies of our David Thompson volume have brought as high as $150. when they have come into the market.

With regard to your suggestion of marking the new bridge with a memorial to Thompson, I think you had better write to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, Ottawa.

Yours sincerely,

Sgd. Julia Jarvis

Secretary.

Notes from

David Thompson's Narrative (J.B.Tyrell)

Published by Champlain Society.

1806

On June 10, 1806, he left this post in the Muskrat country never to return to it, and returned to Cumberland House, where he arrived on June 14. Thence he proceeded at once to Fort William. Here he received instructions to attempt once more to open trade relations with the Indians west of the Rocky Mountains, and he at once returned by way of Cumberland House, where Harmon met him on September 11, to his old home at Rocky Mountain House, where he arrived on October 29. Here he remained trading with the Indians throughout the following winter, and preparing for his journey across the mountains in the following spring.

1807

On May 1, accompanied by his wife and family, Thompson started from Rocky Mountain House to cross the mountains. Finan McDonald took a canoe with provisions up the Saskatchewan river, while Thompson himself travelled on horseback on the north side of the river. On June 3 they reached Kootenay Plain, a wide, open flat on the north side of the river within the mountains, in latitude 56D 2' 6'' N.; and on June 6 they reached the Forks. They then turned up the south branch of the stream, but after ascending it for three miles were obliged to stop, as they could take the canoes no further. They remained here till June 25, when they started across the mountains, packing all their

supplies with them on horses. At 1 p.m. on June 25 they reached the height of land in latitude 51D 48' 27'' N.1 Thence they descended along the banks of a mountain torrent (Blueberry river) to "Kootanie" (Columbia) river, which they reached on June 30, in latitude 51D 25' 14'' N., longitude 116D 52' 45'' W., a mile or two north-west of Moberly station on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Jaco Finlay had been across the mountains to his Place the year before, and built a canoe and left it in what he supposed to be a safe place for Thompson's use when he should arrive, but it was found to have been so badly broken in the meantime as to be now utterly useless. He camped here, near the mouth of the Blueberry, and the members of the party for several days devoted themselves to repacking their stuff and building canoes. On July 12, having placed all the trading goods in canoes, they set out and ascended ((not descended) the Columbia river and reached Lower Columbia lake (now Lake Windermere) on July 18. At the south end of this lake Thompson began to build in latitude 50D 31' 24'' N.; but finding the place unsuitable, he moved on July 29 down the river to about a mile from the lake, and built "Kootanae House" on the west side of the Columbia river, in latitude 50D. 32' 15'8 N., longitude 115D 51' 40'' W., variations 24@D East. Here he remained for the rest of the year, trading with the Kutenia Indians, and taking meteorological and astronomical observations. With the chief of the Flatbow Indians for a guide he made a trip for a few days down the banks of the Kootenay river. He

also carefully measured the heights of some of the neighboring mountains from a measured base of 6,920' Mount Nelson, to the west of the fort he found to be 7,223' above the surface of the lake, which would give a height of 9900'. Mount Nelson, to the west of the fort, he found to be 7,223 feet above the surface of the lake, which would give it a height of 9,900 feet above the sea--a height 100 feet lower than that given on Dr. Dawson's map of 1885.

The pass by which Thompson here crossed the mountains is now known as Hawse Pass, although Joseph Hawse, a clerk of the Hudson's Bay Co. did not begin to use the pass until 1809, two years after Thompson had made his first trip over it. The eastern portion of the pass below the mouth of that great silent barrier of majestic mountain peaks towering up to 18,000 feet high in Western Canada, stretching 500 miles north west of the United States borderline and lying almost on the boundary line between the Provinces of Alberta and British Coloumbia, but mostly in Alberta, para leling also the upper reaches of the Coloumbia and Fraser Rivers and now encompassed all around for all time through the foresight of our Canadian Government and National Parks Board with two of the finest and largest Parks in North America, the southern part known as Banff opened in 1885 comprising 2885 square miles and the Northern part known as Jasper in 1907 with 4200 square miles leaves the reader to visualize perhaps the finest scenic playground in the world of over 7000 square miles containing this wonderful Rockie range with all its other mysterious and

colourful tributes of icefields, lakes, waterfalls, valleys, hotsprings, animals, birds & fishes trails and motor highways dotted all through it to thrill the tourist and traveller from all over the World.

History tells that one of the first white men to cross this great barrier was one David Thompson a fourteen-year old Welsh orphan boy sant out from the Grey coat school at Westminster London in 1783 to be apprenticed to the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Churchill. David was a great scout and wanted always to see places and after several years of fur trading wit Indians and prospecting, he joined up with the North West Traders and was able to fulfil a dream and ambition of his lifetime and Go West into what was then unknown and unchartered country excepting to Indians and buffaloes. So in 1807 he started with a handmade birch bark canoe, four other men and supplies and travelled up the Saskatchewan river through Edmonton which wasn't very much existent then and going west of Rocky Mountain house crossed the Rockies thro the valley with Mount Forbes on one side and Mount Balfour on the other till he came to the upper reaches of the Coloumbia River where he made his first camp and trading post known as the Kootenay House, close to the new scenic motor highway the National Parks Board and Dominion Government are completing thro the Rockies. Other early pioneers and pathfinders of the Hudson Bay Co. and North West Traders known as William Henry, Jasper Hawes, Palliser and George Simpson wended their way in the early years of the 18th century, the latter writing in his journal describing its wonders as follows "Wild and majestic beyond

description and track is in many places nearly impassable and it appears extraordinary how any human being should have stumbled on a pass though such a formidable barrier as we are now scaling."

Hidden away for ages in the heart of these Rockies almost midway between Jasper and Banff Parks and now being opened up and made accessible by the new Highway lies perhaps the biggest iceberg in the World estimated by Lewis Freeman and Byron Harmon in their trip over it in 1923 as being over 10,000 feet high and 150 square miles in area from which commence our Coloumbia triplets namely Rivers Coloumbia south west thro British Coloumbia to Portland and the Pacific Ocean, - Athabaska north to the Artic ocean and Saskatchewan north east through Edmonton to Hudson Bay and the Atlantic ocean. At its very apex and northerly part of it is a huge Snow Dome which Lewis Freeman thought was the source of all three. Nevertheless when the Canadian Pacific engineers put their railroad through just over 50 years ago they avoided this mysterious masterpiece of Nature and blasted their way nearly 200 miles south of it whilst the Grand Trunk cut through almost qs far north of it. Picture to yourself these two big railroad systems blasting and building their roads Across the Rockies, the millions spent in doing so and you will then begin to realize what a picture, and memory for Life you will get by a visit to Jasper or Banff will give you. No artist or writer could find more material than that hidden away in this Rocky Range. Byron Harmon who spent many years photographing these peaks at one time waited nearly one week to get the

best light and effect on Mount Coloumbia.

Notes from a book entitled DAVID THOMPSON, The Explorer by Charles Norris Cochrane, Associate Professor of Ancient History, University College, Toronto, 1924.

Page 166:

In the sheer length of his journeys, few western explorers have equalled the record of Thompson, for he travelled in all not less than fifty thousand miles. Much of this was through country untrodden by the feet of white men; nearly all of it was in regions as yet unsurveyed. The unvarying exactitude with which Thompson mapped this vast area excited the surprise and admiration of members of the Canadian Geological Survey who with infinitely better equipment traced his progresses nearly a century later. There are certain districts which since his day have never been re-surveyed; some of his work therefore still appears on the published maps of Canada.

Throughout his life Thompson was inspired by a restless impulse to push forward the exploration and mapping of the west until not a corner of it remained unknown. The greatest satisfaction of his career was undoubtedly the discovering of the Columbia valley. West of the Rockies, he was not merely a surveyor and explorer, but in a real sense an Empire builder, for he added a region of vast and varied resources to the territories of the Crown.

Page 169:

Throughout his career in the West, Thompson was one of those whose influence among the Indians was almost wholly for good, and whose activities shed lustre on the history

of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, who they served. His travels carried him into the rocky belt south-west of the Bay, over the prairies, through the western forest, and across the mountains of the Pacific slope. Wherever he came in contact with the natives, he easily won their admiration and respect. This was due to the insight with which he studied their customs and to the sympathy with which he regarded their way of life. For Thompson was infinitely more than a trader: he had the mind of a scientist and the soul of a poet.

Love of country springs from many roots; but perhaps the deepest patriotism is that which comes from an intimate knowledge of the face of the land itself. Thompson loved the great North West with the love of a man who knew it in all its moods; for he had journeyed through it and studied it carefully over a long period of years. He foresaw the day when the rolling prairies would be covered with smiling farms, and the Columbia valley would be the seat of a rich and vigorous civilization. In one respect, his vision of the future fell short of reality. Living in an age prior to the development of railways, he failed to see that these regions were destined to be linked by stell bands with the Canadas in a Dominion stretching from sea to sea. He thought of them rather as isolated communities, the middle west looking mainly for its outlet to Hudson Bay, the Pacific coast joined to civilization by the paths of ocean.

Characters such as David Thompson are all too rare in the annals of a nation. So long as honour is due to great men, his memory deserves to be enshrined in the hearts of his country-men; and his high qualities should be a model to those who inherit the Dominion which he did so much to make.

THE SEARCH FOR THE WESTERN SEA

By Lawrence J. Burpee.

Three names must ever stand first in the annals of exploration in Western Canada. La Verandrye, Mackenzie, Thompson.

Of these three only one, Alexander Mackenzie has ever received the meed that was due him.

Parkman, it is true, did something toward awakening public interest in the splendid achievements of La Verandrye and his sons, and Dr. Elliott Coues made an equall effort to secure recognition for David Thompson but the fact remains that La Verandrye and Thompson are today, as in the past, a little more than names to the large extent to the fact that the original journals of both of these have never yet appeared in print except in very fragmentary form while Mackenzies narrative was published during his lifetime and gained immediate recognition. The Journals of La Verandry may be published before long but it is feared that unless the Canadian Government can be induced to shoulder the responsibility there is small chance of Thompson's Journals seeing the light, their

very voloumiousness making the project too expensive for any private publisher. In their original form they fill forty volumes of manuscripts, and cover the amazing period of sixty-two years, from 1784 to 1850. Yet it reflects slight credit on Canada and Canadians that the names of these men, representing all that is best in the two races, should have been allowed to sink into oblivion, while men of infinitely less worth have been honored both during their lifetime and afterwards. The people of the United States show a finer appreciation of the value of original discoveries. The delight in honoring the memory of the heroic pathfinders of their country; and it is sufficiently humiliating that such slight recognition as Canadian explorers have had in their own country is largely due to the interest and enthusiasm of American historians.

NAMING NEW HIGHWAY

A suggestion to Edmonton Journal, Nov. 16, 1936.

In reading your valuable paper I was very interested in the suggestions for a name for our new highway in the Rockies, and think our board of trade and motor association officials are quite right in their opposition to a proposed one of "Canada Icefields Highway" for Canada has been too long advertised and pictured in the United States and England as always "ice and snow."

This belt highway nearly completed, and connecting up two of the largest national and most beautiful mountainous parks in the world, Jasper and Banff, will open up for the first time that most wonderful panorama view in all Canada, the Columbia Glacier icefield.

In that interesting book of Lewis Freeman's "On the Roof of the Rockies," which has been in our public library for some time, he described an exploration trip he took with Byron Harmon of Banff many years ago over this glacier and how they travelled for many miles on top of its almost level, slightly undulating surface.

Our federal survey branch at Ottawa published a most valuable and interesting map, showing all this country, after their surveyors had mapped out the inter-provincial survey some years ago. This map should be placed in all our public offices for it will be so needed for reference now.

This new highway, which your paper, our boards of trade and motor associations have worked so hard to get

completed the last fifteen years will form another landmark in the development and history of western Canada--and Alberta and British Columbia provinces should do their utmost to make it an outstanding feature for coronation year, 1937.

One can hardly visualize such a masterpiece of nature--being in the centre of our Rockies, midway between our two provinces, probably the biggest iceberg in the world, averaging 9,000 feet high and over 150 square miles in area--from which start our "Columbia Triplets," namely: Rivers "Columbia", southwest towards the Pacific ocean; "Athabaska", north to the Arctic ocean; and "Saskatchewan", northeast through Edmonton to Hudson Bay and the Atlantic ocean.

I would strongly urge that this early geographical name of "Columbia" be given the best consideration for a new name for this highway. It belts the glacier of that name, it starts the river, has one of the highest mountain peaks named after it right near its centre, and forms half the name of our sister province, and carries out our board of trade's secretary's interesting suggestion of the name of a Canadian flower, or very nearly so, anyway, in "columbine". I feel sure the general public would largely support "Columbia" and final tribute to this large highway work.

Possibly your valuable paper--co-operating with our government, boards of trade, motor associations, Scouts and Guides, could arrange to have a big official opening for August next, 1937, and get our new King, if he visits

Canada, to hoist the flag to a united chorus of "Hail Columbia", right on its centre. Edmonton is waking up at last to many new things, and this should prove to be one of the most popular and interesting plans for coronation year, 1937.

It behoves every one of our Alberta and British Columbia citizens to get behind it, talk and write about it to their friends--who would come and have a holiday trip to see this wonderful work of nature opening up for everybody in 1937.

Editor's note: Unfortunately, there is a Columbia highway in the north-western United States.

Edmonton Journal, Aug. 12/39

HISTORIC SITES

Sir: Your timely suggestion in Monday's paper of a spot that deserves to marked--namely the original site of Fort Edmonton on our government building grounds fronting on our Saskatchewan river--should be arranged for by our provincial authorities at once and this royal visit year of 1939 would be a very opportune time. A suitable stone cairn or drinking fountain marking this original site would keep and show this historical spot for all time to come.

I noticed in reading your paper a few weeks ago that plans are being formulated for a grand opening of the Jasper-Banff highway next summer and would like to make another suggestion for this early Saskatchewan river trail that a suitable cairn be erected near the new bridge over the Saskatchewan on the Jasper-Banff highway for David Thompson that earoy pioneer who traveled up it through Edmonton and first crossed the Rockies in 1807. A copy of his map on a bronze table, the first map ever made of western Canada, would be most appropriate and intensely interesting to the thousands of tourists who will pass by it the next few years. I would strongly recommend this for the consideration of the local committeee and our national parks board. <u>This first trail in Alberta</u>, our Saskatchewan river, surely deserves such historical sites to be shown and known to every citizen and visitor for it has been neglected too long and did much to make Alberta and the west known to all the world when no other trail or route was possible.

J.B. Tyrell, Esq. August 25th, 1939.

Edmonton, Alberta.

Dear Sir:

I am very interested in the early career of "David Thompson" which was entirely due thro your most interesting narrative in our Library here published by the Champlain Society, which I was able to borrow several times early 1937, and ever since have tried to get his name mentioned in the different booklets published on our Rockies. I wrote the National Parks Board last fall and was glad to see this early pioneer mentioned in their Jasper Park Booklet this spring, a copy of which I am taking the liberty of enclosing.

I am very anxious to see some permanent monument erected to this great pioneer at the new bridge site on the Jasper Banff highway where he first crossed the Rockies in 1807 on the Saskatchewan River in his birch bark canoe. I am having some interesting correspondence from Mr. F.H. Williamson Controller of the Parks Board concerning this, in which he mentions the bronze cairn north of Jasper Town over the Athabaska River, but many tourists travelling North from Banff or South thro Edmonton and Jasper to the new highway may never see this and it is surely due to this great memory to erect one where he first crossed thro the Saskatchewan River. If I submit a suggestion it should be of natural Stone or Rock side, right at this junction where every tourist and traveller would see it in all the years to come and should

have if possible engraved a copy of his first western map as shewn.....

I would appreciate your considering this and use your influence to advise or mention same to the powers that be in Ottawa when you get back. There are hundreds of our students here, and travellers too who have heard or known of David Thompson's name and pathfinding career and nothing would be more outstanding and noticed as some such monument at this early historical crossing.

Trusting you will be able to make some effort for this, which I will surely appreciate and be grateful for.

Yours truly,

Dr. J.B. Tyrell,
1314 Metropolitan Bldg.,
44 Victoria St.,
Toronto,2., Ont.

Dear Sir: Re: David Thompson

For the last three years since reading your most interesting narrative of the above mentioned early pioneer one of the finest scouts our West ever had, I have been trying hard and written many, many letters to influential people to try and get some worthy recognition and suitable monument erected at or near the New Jasper Banff highway where it crosses over the North Saskatchewan River. Thompson used this Saskatchewan river trail, right through the centre of our Alberta Province, to cross the Rockies for the first time in May 1807. He made it after years of planning and got thro with his companions, everything against him doing it, eating wild horseflesh and moss bread to keep themselves alive, as the Winter was so hard and food so scarce.

This "Wonder Highway" will be opened this summer after many years of hard work by our National Parks engineers, and thousands of tourists will pass along its thrilling grandeur, hiking, riding or in their streamline cars, right over the new bridge crossing of this Saskatchewan River, what a picture or contrast, home-made birch bark canoe, fighting Indians, eating wild horse flesh and moss bread in 1807 and one of the finest mountain highways in the World with the latest and most modern automobiles travelling over it with their chicken sandwich lunches in 1940.

This first crossing of Thompson's is one of the most interesting early Western historical tales we have, but who knows it - not one in a thousand and its a standing disgrace to our higher authorities that it is not known or tabulated more. Plans should have been made before to have some dignified tablet erected at this point telling every traveller and tourist the interesting story.

Mr. Robert J. Stead - Superintendent of the National Parks Board, Ottawa, has been up here the last three weeks and Jasper to organize with local committees for the grand opening of this new Jasper-Banff highway. It's going to be one of the highlights of 1940 - and deservedly so too. He, Mr. Stead, is most sympathetic towards the suggestion and doing all he can, I have had several kind letters from him over the last 18 months in reference to it.

I wrote you in connection with it on August 14th last and you very kindly wrote me on Aug. 24th promising your kind support. I understand the Historic Sites & Monuments Board at Ottawa are having a Board meeting early next month, when it may be considered - and I would greatly appreciate same if you would kindly write Judge Howay at once and do what you can to get his support for so worthy a cause. I know by the tone of your letter you are hundred per cent in favour of it, but action should be taken at once.

If your united efforts can get some monument erected telling the story of this first crossing by Thompson so that every tourist and traveller can see it and tell of it afterwards to his friends - how much more interesting their highway trip will be.

Our early Western History has been neglected too long, and it contains some of the most interesting ravels ever written. Pardon me troubling youlike this, but if your and Mr. Stead's and my own small effort can get some rightful recognition for David Thompson, who blazed the first trail across the Rockies by the Saskatchewan River our efforts will not be in vain.

COPY

Deputy Minister's Office Thompson -40

Public Archives of Canada

Ottawa, June 17, 1939.

Dear Sir:-

Your letter of the 5th instant, addressed to the Surveyor General, has been referred to this Department for reply. The Thompson map to which you refer is in the possession of the Archives of Toronto, and no copy of it is available in this Department. The Archivist at Toronto is Dr. J.J. Talman, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

Yours sincerely,

Norman Fee
Acting Deputy Minister

J.W. Sherwin, Esq.,
844 - Tegler Building,
Edmonton, Alberta.

Department
of
Mines and Resources File:U.325-10-50

Ottawa 1st September, 1939.

Dear Sir,

Referring to previous correspondence, I am now pleased to inform you that your proposal for the erection of a memorial or landmark on the Jasper-Banff Highway, to commemorate the work of David Thompson, will be considered at the next meeting of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. It is not expected, however, that this meeting will be held before the latter part of May, 1940.

Yours faithfully,

Sgd. F.H.H. Williamson,
Controller.

Kirkland Lake Gold Mining Company, Limited
1314 Metropolitan Building
44 Victoria Street
Toronto 2
Canada

April 23rd, 1940

J.W. Sherwin, Esq.,
11055 - 81st Avenue,
Edmonton, Alta.

Dear Mr. Sherwin:-

Thank you for your letter of the 17th inst. which I have read with much interest, and I shall be glad to discuss the matter with Judge Howay when he comes east next month.

However, I had an idea that David Thompson's work was much more generally known throughout the West than you would appear to indicate in your letter. It is not really so very long ago that I claimed, in a paper read before the British Association, that Thompson was the greatest land photographer who ever lived. The statement was received with the utmost scepticism and even to a certain extent with ridicule, but now, among geographers, that position is granted to him without denial or quibble, both in England and in America. Perhaps I should qualify this by stating that Professor Morton of Saskatchewan would appear to wish to substitute Duncan McGillivray for Thompson, but Morton's criticism is not taken seriously.

Besides Thompson's Narrative, I have of course published a great many papers about Thompson's work, and as far as I know they are accepted by geographers as correct, and it is quite possible that when the American Geographical Society awarded me its Gold Medal it was partly for the work that I had done in bringing David Thompson's earlier work to light.

Trusting that you will have a wonderful gathering at the opening of the new highway, and with kindest regards I remain

Yours sincerely,

Sgd. J.B. Tyrrell

Sherwin Thompson -44

Department of Mines and Resources — Crossing the Rockies.

Ottawa August 3, 1938.

Dear Sir,

I wish to thank you for the copy of the Civil Service Bulletin which you were good enough to forward and have read the article entitled "Crossing the Rockies", written by yourself, with interest. In connection with the suggestion made that a memorial be erected to David Thompson, I might state for your information that on the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada this Bureau has erected a cairn with bronze tablet on Rocky Point, near the end of the Athabaska Bridge in Jasper National Park.

A photograph of the tablet with inscription is enclosed.

Yours faithfully,

Sgd. F.H.H. Williamson,
Controller.

Edm. Journal, Aug.13, 1940.

J.W.Sherwin CROSSING THE ROCKIES Thompson -45

Every Englishman loves a horse and Canadians and American, too, and history often relates how, when they got in a tough spot they called for one to help them through. Shakespeare in his tragic Richard lll play made that famous quotation how, when he had almost lost the battle of Bosworth Field, he turned to his soldiers and cried: "My Kingdom for a horse." Tourists who are visiting and traveling over our new Banff-Jasper mountain highway may be interested how one of our greatest explorers felt the same way when he first saw the Rocky Mountains. It was David Thompson, born in London, England, who had been apprenticed with the Hudson's Bay Co. and had traveled for them for nearly 12 years covering over 9,000 miles of nearly all new trails on the western prairies by hiking, snowshoeing and birch bark canoe. Finally he came further west on the North Saskatchewan river trail, passing where Edmonton now stands and making camp at Rocky Mountain House, when he saw this towering nature's fence before him. It must have looked gigantic and almost impossible with its many peaks some over 13,000 feet high. No white man had ever crossed the Rockies at this pass before, but "he called for a horse" and did it. He rode on the north bank of the river and his friend Finan McDonald and his wife and family with provisions followed him in a birch bark canoe on the river. Dr. J.B. Tyrell who wrote up his narrative afterwards relates how the winter was a hard one, game was very scarce and they had to eat wild horse-flesh and moss bread to keep themselves alive. They crossed right through and camped again on the Columbia

river on the other side. Maybe our tourists on our mountain pack ponies will pause awhile at this historical crossing where the new bridge on the highway crosses it and visualize again this great scout who did it in 1807 with the help of a horse.

10119 - 100 A St.,
Edmonton, Alberta
Jan. 30, 1941.

Mr. Macdonald Burka,
Director,
Evergreen & Gold Annual,
University Building,
Edmonton, Alberta.

Dear Sir:

David Thompson

Would it be possible for you and your editors to make mention in your interesting Year Book of one of the early pioneers who perhaps did some of the hardest and best work in opening up what is now Alberta and the West away back 150 years ago, the man I refer to is David Thompson, which river in B.C. is named after. Probably he camped right on the River Bank where your University Buildings now stand, when he was making his first and historical trip up our North Saskatchewan River trail to Rocky Mountain House Camp, before he crossed the Rockies. I notice in last week's Journal the Board of Trade and citizens of Rocky Mountain House, are blazing a trail along no doubt through which he rode to connect up with the New Jasper Banff Highway, and are going to call it David Thompson Highway and deservedly so too.

I have two cuts (elecgros) in my possession which were used in a short story about him in the Civil Service Bulletin which I enclose rough proofs of attached tho this, which I will be only too pleased to lend you if of any

service, and also some other notes which may be of interest and would appreciate you giving this request your consideratio and print a good word again, for one of the finest scouts the West ever had.

Yours truly,

Copies of prints or cuts available from

Mr. Sherwin:

1. Bridge over N. Saskatchewan River Jasper-Banff Highway.
2. David Thompson.
3. Wild Horses.
4. Early Trader in Western Canada.